

RADIO IN DEPTH

ISSUE 15

SEPTEMBER, 1975

"Jack Armstrong,
Jack Armstrong, Jack Armstrong-"
"The ALL-AMERICAN BOY!!!!!"



RADIO IN DEPTH

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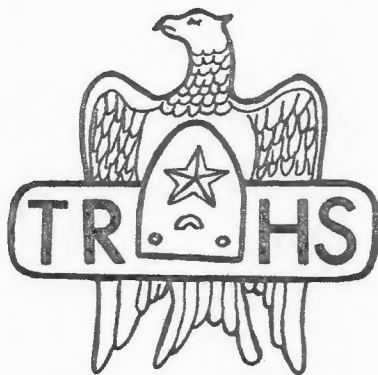
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THE " _____ " OF RADIO

It was always there. The " _____ " was there from the first RADIO program to the last of the "golden age" of RADIO. The sickness that was " _____ " spent most of those years when RADIO programming flourished hid in the filing cabinets of the major networks. We all knew " _____ " was there and that " _____ " sometimes robbed us of the best RADIO had to offer, but we looked the other way. " _____ " may have been the snake in the garden, but what could we have done? Who would be the first one to lead the fight against " _____ ".

Sometimes " _____ " slipped up and let some of its food escape. Remember that time Mae West visited Charlie McCarthy on his show. Oh, " _____ " was there and " _____ " kept an eye on every word of the script and every reflection of the voice during the rehearsal. Mae was to play Eve and the little wooden head Adam, but there was not an out of place word in the script. The rehearsal was a classic with Mae West reading the lines as if they were a sermon. " _____ " had no doubt that the show was going to a model of the network's idea of what a show should be—clean and maybe a little dull. But came showtime something happened—something " _____ " had not planned on. Mae West read every line with all the words there and all the words in the right place, only that time she read them with emphasis and emotion and by her voice alone she created one of the biggest scandals in the history of RADIO.

There was another famous case when " _____ " was caught off guard. It was in 1938 and it happened to Orson Welles and the Mercury players. The agent of " _____ " had gone over the script with a fine tooth comb more than once and the only changes he made were minor. Like replacing the announcement by President Roosevelt with an announcement by a fictitious cabinet member. But during the show all was lost. Even the fictitious cabinet member sounded too much like the President of the United States of America and all across America people were acting as they would have acted if there had really been an attack from Mars. The story goes that the last one third of the show would have been cut off the air if it had not been for an unknown policeman pointing out that the sudden silence or music would have been all that was needed to convince many people that they were listening to the real thing after all. " _____ " had lost, but because of its loss it had become more powerful and determined.

Hour after hour, day after day, week after week, " _____ " was there on the job. Somewhere behind the scene. Unheard over the air. Unseen by the audience. But " _____ " was there. And sometimes it would come to the surface for a moment. Just long enough to see its true nature. One such time was on April 20, 1947.

Every history of RADIO record Fred Allen's name among the top ten RADIO comedians. His was a style that is not easily forgotten. He was a master performer. And on that Sunday night in 1947 he became one of the patriots of RADIO.

Certain lines were not to be read on the air said the agent of " _____ ",

but Fred was not about to cut his big joke for the evening, so he said, "There's a little _____". At that moment the agent of "_____" pushed a button in the control booth and silence replaced Fred's voice for a good thirty-five seconds. "_____" was in the open. Fred Allen had turned a light on "_____" for everyone to see.

Every listener that realized Fred had been cut off wondered why. Well, here is what he was going to say: "There's a little man in the company we work for who is Vice-President in Charge of Program Ends. This little man is responsible for clipping of time from the end of our program when our program runs overtime. He then marks down how much time is saved and adds it up... and when he has saved enough seconds and minutes to make two weeks, he uses the two weeks of our time for his vacation."

No one seems to remember, but Fred had a good reason for wanting those lines in the script. The week before, April 13, THE FRED ALLEN SHOW had been cut short because it was running overtime. In the early days of RADIO no one seemed to care very much if a program ran over a few second. Everyone makes mistakes—even the RADIO writers, directors, and performers. But as RADIO came of age the air time became more valuable and the overtime became lost money so the networks took steps to cut out losses during prime time. Fred, however, did not except the change in policy gracefully.

Since the networks were the "gods of RADIO" and Fred Allen was only one of the royal family, NBC issued the following statement to the Times: "We asked that changes be made in the script, and changes were not made. Therefore, the program was off the air for about twenty-five seconds at the beginning."

Only if the network could have seen what was about to happen, maybe they would have handled the whole thing differently, but they couldn't and didn't. By Tuesday the ad agency for the sponsor was up in arms. A representative of the J. Walker Thompson Advertising Agency made the following statement to NBC and the press: "We buy and pay for half an hour's time from NBC for this program. And that's what we expect to get. Allen was cut off the air for about thirty-five seconds. So NBC is going to get a bill for the time we didn't get. And, oddly enough, it's a nice little chunk of dough."

Royalty is only human, and humans are subject to illness and death. Fred was not a well man and his fight with NBC was not making him any healthier. Other members of the royal family of RADIO were not going to see Fred suffer alone. They too were ready to do battle. On Tuesday, April 22, 1947, the BOB HOPE SHOW was being aired from Glendale, California. The second Bob mentioned Fred's name he was cut off. That same night Red Skelton said on his show, "Gee, did you hear about Fred Allen _____," and was followed by about fifteen seconds of silence. Now the public wanted an answer, so the network went back to the Times with this god-like statement: "Two of NBC's comedians decided to have a little fun with the network tonight and both were cut off the air for about twenty seconds. Bob Hope and Red Skelton decided they would make some remarks about Fred Allen being cut off last Sunday night. NBC authorities in Hollywood told them, just as they told Fred Allen, that if they did not delete objectionable material they would be cut off. But Hope and Skelton ignored the NBC order, and like Allen they were cut off for a few seconds." "_____" had struck again, and again its crime had been heard by the RADIO audience.

Right or wrong, the FRED ALLEN SHOW lost ratings because of Fred's tiff with the network, and the worst part of it was Fred knew he would be the

loser no matter who won the battle. And the fight was weighing on him heavily. Fred had said to reporter that Monday that the action of " " had been a result "of a new rule that says you can't kid RADIO on the air." That statement had spurred the London Times to make the Fred Allen-NBC feud front page news (while the New York Times never published a word about it closer to the front than page 25.) The pressure on NBC was rising. The Civil Liberties Union was already working on the case, and their lawyer was sure Fred's constitutional rights had been violated. NBC was running out of time before some member of Congress came after their hide, and they were beginning to realize it.

In an interview Red Skelton stated, "NBC stands for Nothing But Confusion." Bob Hope told reporters, "the head censor probably has a cauliflower head." And NBC was ready to face the problem. A group from the top met in a well lit room on the second floor of 30 Rockefeller Plaza to plan their next move. By the time they filed silently out into the hall the room was full of smoke, and NBC ruled the day they had given the order "to pull the plug" on Fred Allen.

Giving in, NBC offered Fred Allen a job as honorary vice-president in Charge of Allen. They explained that Fred's health was not good enough to be offered the real thing and that the ban on kidding RADIO on the air had been lifted. Fred turned down the title and voiced in private his belief that the network was only "playing games" with him.

Hearing that NBC had given in earlier that day, Kenneth Baughart tested the truth in what he had heard on his 11:00 PM EST broadcast (Wednesday, April 23, 1947). He was not cut off the air.

Then came Sunday, April 27.

? Would Fred Allen be cut off? Every one knew he was going to say something to see if he would. Emotions were mixed. Some had sided with the network. Some were afraid to listen just in case their hero was cut off again, something they couldn't take hearing again. Some were just sick of what was being done to RADIO by " ". Anyway, the audience was down many percentage points in the Hooper ratings.

Having gone through what he had, Fred was not about to start his show without a dig at NBC. When the singers at the beginning of the show chanted, "Mr. Allen", Fred cautioned them to "watch your language, kiddies." While explaining daylight saving time Fred said it was like RADIO "where they take your time away." And nothing happened. He was not cut off. So at the end of the program Fred stated, "We got it all on tonight."

Everyone seemed happy at the outcome of Fred's battle with the network, but no one seemed to pay much attention to the fact that just after the show Fred flew to Cleveland, Ohio. Fred went to Cleveland to check into a hospital there. Why? He was there for a routine check-up [so they said]. The doctor that took Fred's case while he was in the Cleveland hospital was Dr. Roy Scott, a well known heart specialist. When Fred was asked by the press about his trip, Fred answered, "I heard that several Cleveland doctors had developed a cure for something I haven't got so I decided to fly here and have a look."

Licking its wounds, " " went back to work as if the April 20th cut had never happened. But that had not been the first time " " had to give in to reason and the weight of the programs " " fed on.

Long before the end of the war (World War II) one of the soap operas ran into trouble with " ". The heroine entered a room to find a small silk flag with a swastika on it. Snooping a little more she found a rifle and a military jacket. She at once assumed the obvious—a spy was living there.

Not caring what followed in the story, the network ordered the sequence cut from the story. The network argued that a spy scare would unduly frighten

the listener. The script writer refused to change the story and called the sponsor's ad agency, who took the side of the writer against the network. When the network stood their ground, the agency called the sponsor. The sponsor took the side of the agency and the writer, but still the network refused to let the sequence be aired. The sponsor went to the editor of a large newspaper, and the editor sided with the sponsor, the agency, and the writer. But the network was not going to give in unless the sky was falling, or going to fall on them.

Outraged, the sponsor flew to New York to tell the president of the network that if that sequence was cut the sponsor would cut all its shows from the network—and the sponsor had a lot of shows. Needless to say the sequence was aired. The big joke came on the day the sequence was aired. Just following the soap opera there was a Government warning that all Americans should watch what they said because Hitler's agents were everywhere.

! Spy ! No, not a spy. Later in the story we learned that the flag and rifle were just souvenirs brought back from the war by an American veteran.

There was also the time Wendell Willkie was to appear on INFORMATION PLEASE. For reasons of their own, the CBS readers tried to prevent Willkie from appearing, but failed for lack of reason. Although the Willkie incident is still under investigation to determine the truth, there is another INFORMATION PLEASE story that we know to be true without farther investigation. Georgia's Ellis Arnall was to be on the show, but the readers objected to him being introduced as "a courageous defender of democratic freedom." Dan Golenpaul was the owner and producer of INFORMATION PLEASE and he wanted the line left the way it was. The battle waged hot and heavy until Dan told the network that he was going to use the words and if he was cut off he would go to the press and tell all. He used the line as it had been written and CBS did not cut him off.

"Damn it, Robin. You can't say 'Holy Cow!' on the air !" an angry network man shouted at an actor playing Robin on one of the SUPERMAN episodes. The story goes that Ronald Liss who played Robin of Batman and Robin fame had thrown himself into the part during a rehearsal and without thinking anything about it added a "Holy Cow!" to the script. Who would have ever thought that " " would stop the "boy wonder" from voicing his favorite expression. One wonders how the network would have handled Earnest Hemingway on a live talk show ?

SUPERMAN was always getting in trouble with someone. Take the time Superman was chasing suspect and made the mistake of describing him as having "bushy eyebrows just like John L. Lewis." The Labor Unions came apart at the seams and demanded blood for the insult. Blood they did not get, promises they did.

When " " came out of hiding everyone in RADIO felt unsafe, unsure of where " " would strike next. If one of the readers had ever learned dog they might of even taken Sandy's "Arf" out of the LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE script. Take the time they cut the following lines from a Bell Telephone Company's commercial: "Through the years it has been and is now the Bell System's policy to provide good wages and good working conditions. That is essential in carrying out obligations to furnish dependable service to the public." The network thought the lines were too controversial and Bell let it go without a fight but not before a Bell representative had expressed his sincere concern over the mental health of the network officials who wanted the lines cut.

On NBC a woman could be pregnant, but on CBS a woman had better be "going to have a baby" or she would be cut from the script. This line would have passed on NBC, but look what a RADIO comedian could have done with it. He might have let his voice drop off at the word "Pregnant", pause, quicker delivery in the form of an exclamation to the word "Baby", pause, then the rest of the sentence slowly. CBS would be raided the next day.

We said that line would pass inspection, but no one really knows if it would have. John Lear once reported the follow: "In an episode of a soap opera, the hero of the piece left New York by train. The girl who was in love with him appeared in the next episode and said she had traveled with him as far as Buffalo. A gimlet-eyed reader caught that remark, remembering that New York to Buffalo was an overnight trip. What would people think? The day was saved by taking the girl off the train at Albany, before dark."

Even the line from Macbeth, "Out, damned Spot!", was blue penciled out of a script while undoubtedly Shakespear was turning in his grave.

But our hero, Fred Allen, found a clever way of getting back at the men behind "_____". For weeks a character without substance by the name of Mr. Button moved in and out of the Fred Allen shows. Everyone was beginning to think Fred had created Mr. Button just to make the listener suffer.

Then Milton Berle delivered the following lines: "Our show was written by Nat Hiken and Aaron Ruben. Our technician was Joe Silva. The pages of the script were clipped together by Patricia Clyce. The man who blew the pitch pipe was Lue Lane. The usher on the main floor who said, 'Form a single line, please' was Bernard Klezmer. The man who unfloded the chairs for the orchestra was Max Peltz. For any suggestions or complaints about the show, see Mr. Button on the third floor."

After Milton had used his name everyone was beginning to think Mr. Robert Button whose office was on the second floor of the NBC main studios was real. Some even said they saw a dark haired young man who answered to the name Button leaving 30 Rockefeller Plaza late at night. If that was the man he had some reason to walk only on well lit streets.

A few days after Milton's disclosure the JACK BENNY SHOW had this sequence: "Do you wear suspenders?" "No." "Do you wear a belt?" "No." "Then waht holds up your pants?" "The NBC censors."

NBC gave in and admitted that a Mr. Robert Button did work for them at night, but he was no censor. What was Mr. Button? He was in charge of "editing for policy" on the NBC night time shows. One reporter is said to have asked CBS if "by some chance do you have a person who edits for policy by the name of Mr. Bows?" The answer was "NO!"

Fred Allen knew all too well the sting of the blue pencil. Even his idea to equip the United Nations' Building with revolving doors so the Russians could walk out faster was blue penciled. But until his death in 1956 Fred never really excepted the "_____" as being necessary. Who knows, at some moment in time when he was feeling a little better he might had gone off by himself and fashioned a wooden stake for the heart of "_____", but if he did he never lived to use it.

By now you have guessed that there is a coded message in the contents of this article. Such messages appear throughout RADIO script writing history. But the best way for a writer to get by the censor was to use a word or pause over and over again until it took on the meaning to the listener you wanted it to. Now we come to the use of "_____" as a new word to replace an old one. By now you should know what "_____" is, and your questions will go unanswered unless you can answer them them yourself. So please don't write RADIO IN DEPTH and ask what word replaces "_____". We just might tell you and ruin your day.

If you would like to hear more about the activities of "_____" just write and let us know. We have a file full of lines that ended up on "the cutting censor's floor".

LYNN BIGLER, OF WFAA IN DALLAS

ALTHOUGH LYNN WAS ON THE AIR FOR ONLY A SHORT TIME EACH DAY EVERYONE WHO EVER HEARD HIM SEEMS TO REMEMBER HIS VOICE. LYNN WAS BORN IN MILES, TEXAS AND WENT TO COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS. HIS REASON FOR GOING TO UT WAS THAT IT WAS ONE OF THE FEW LOCAL COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES THAT HAD ITS OWN RADIO STATION DURING THOSE DEPRESSION DAYS OF THE 30's.

AT UT LYNN TRIED TO PUT TOGETHER AN ACT WITH ROSWELL PATTERSON, WHO LATTER BECAME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE OAK CLIFF Y.M.C.A. IN DALLAS. THEY DID SO WELL THAT THEY HAD TO GIVE UP THEIR ROOM IN THE DORMITORY AND MOVE OUT TO KUT'S TRANSMITTER.

AFTER GRADUATION LYNN WENT BACK HOME AND LANDED A JOB AT KGKL IN NEARBY SAN ANGELO. THERE HE "NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD, OR SO LITTLE." HE DID EVERYTHING AT KGKL: MAN-ON-THE-STREET BROADCASTS; RODIEO AND BASEBALL COVERAGES; AND EVEN CONDUCTED SALES ON USED CAR LOTS, AIRING THE EVENTS BY PLACING THE MICROPHONES NEXT TO THE CARS' EXHAUST PIPES.

FROM KGKL LYNN WENT TO KNFT IN WITCHITA FALLS, TEXAS. MARTIN B. CAMPBELL, GENERAL MANAGER OF WFAA, WAS TURNING THE DIAL OF HIS RADIO ONE NIGHT AND HEARD LYNN'S VOICE. WITHIN A FEW DAYS LYNN WAS ON HIS WAY TO DALLAS. AT WFAA HE DID FLOWER COMMERCIALS FOR THE FANT MILLING COMPANY. HE WOULD RECORD A COMMERCIAL TO BE HEARD OVER THE TEXAS QUALITY NETWORK AND THREE TIMES A DAY HE WOULD DO A LIVE ONE MINUTE COMMERCIAL. HE WAS SO GOOD AT SELLING BISCUITS THAT HE RECEIVED AT LEAST TWELVE LETTERS A DAY FOR YEARS. LYNN WAS ALSO ON THE SATURDAY NIGHT SHINDIG AT 10:15 PM CST.

LYNN BIGLER SUCCESS WAS DUE TO: COMPLETE NATURALNESS; SELF-CRITICISM, LIBERALLY APPLIED; AND EXPERIENCE—A COMBINATION THAT WAS HARD TO BEAT.

THE BLUE PHANTOM MURDERS—AN
"I LOVE A MYSTERY" SCRIPT BY
CARLTON E. MORSE (1950)

AS LONG AS INTEREST IS SHOWN, WE WILL INCLUDE AN EPISODE OF THIS I LOVE A MYSTERY STORY IN EACH ISSUE FOR UP TO FIFTEEN ISSUES. UNLESS AT LEAST 50% OF OUR READER WRITE AND ASK US TO CONTINUE WE WILL DISCONTINUE THIS FEATURE WITH THE NEXT ISSUE.

FOR THOSE READERS WHO ARE WONDERING WHY WE ARE PRINTING A LONG SCRIPT AS PART OF RADIO IN DEPTH, WE WISH TO EXPLAIN. WE ARE NOT USING THIS MATERIAL AS FILLER. TO DO SO WOULD BE TO UNDERESTIMATE ITS VALUE TO THE HISTORY OF RADIO. I LOVE A MYSTERY IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF A SPECIAL TYPE OF RADIO PROGRAM. IT TELLS A LONG STORY IN SHORT EPISODES (STAIRWAY TO THE SUN IS SEVEN AND ONE HALF HOURS LONG.) UNLIKE MOST OF THE LONG STORIES IN THE HISTORY OF RADIO, THIS STORY IS NOT AN ADAPTATION OF A NOVEL, IT WAS WRITTEN FOR RADIO.

WHY PICK THE BLUE PHANTOM MURDERS? IT IS NEITHER THE LONGEST I LOVE A MYSTERY STORY, NOR THE SHORTEST. IT IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST, NOR THE WORST. IT IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE AVERAGE I LOVE A MYSTERY STORY.

READ AND RELIVE THE ADVENTURE, DRAMA, AND INTRIGUE OF OLD—WHICH WAS RADIO.

EPISODE 3

MUTUAL

"I LOVE A MYSTERY"

STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

"THE BLUE PHANTOM MURDERS"

JUNE 6, 1950

TUESDAY

SOUND: (TRAIN AND WHISTLE)

ANNCR: The Mutual Broadcasting System presents "I LOVE A
MYSTERY."

SOUND: (TRAIN AND WHISTLE)

(MUSIC:.....ORGAN - "Valse Triste")

SOUND: (SIREN...SCREECH OF BRAKES)

ANNCR: A new Carlton Morse Adventure Thriller!.....
"The Blue Phantom Murders."

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-2- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

SOUND: (CLOCK STRIKES SEVEN)

ANNCR: Seven o'clock in the morning aboard the power yacht Blue Phantom somewhere in the South Atlantic Ocean. Jack Packard, Doc Long and Reggie York, three comrades in adventure, were hired to come on the voyage of the Blue Phantom which is allegedly on a scientific expedition. They were hired by Arnold Foster, millionaire master and owner of the vessel although they have not been able to find out why although they've been to sea for eleven days. Aboard the craft besides the three comrades and Captain Foster, are Foster's wife, Ruth, years younger than her husband; Dr. Parks, scientist; Dr. Davids an M.D.; Swensen, engineer; Charley and Pete, two able seamen and the cabin steward. Yesterday, Jack noticed an undercurrent of hostilities among Parks, Dr. Davids and Captain Foster, something deep and sinister, which was rapidly being brought to a head because of Parks and Dr. Davids' interest in the Captain's young wife. And then last night the cabin steward died. Captain Foster said murder but Dr. Davids meager autopsy said death due to snake venom. During the autopsy Jack and Doc stayed in the medical ward while Reggie was sent out to watch Captain Foster who was acting strangely. An hour later Jack and Doc found Reggie sprawled on the deck unconscious. That was last night, and now at seven o'clock this morning--

DOC: (COMING TO MIKE) No use gettin' up, Reggie, it's only seven...How's the head?

REGGIE: Bit thick...Jove, what a brute of a blow someone gave me...

DOC: Just sneaked up behind you and WHAMMED you, huh?

cr

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-3- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

REGGIE: Quite....Had no idea it was coming...

JACK: Well, you gave us the scare of our lives....

DOC: Doggone if you didn't, feller. ..When we seen you a-layin'
down there on the deck, jes' after Dr. Davids said the
steward'd died of snake-bite....Hooooooooo!

REGGIE: Bit of a two-legged snake that finished me off.....

DOC: Yeah and I'd jes' like to git my hands on the feller that
done it....Doggone if this here ship ain't gettin' to be
plum DANGEROUS.

JACK: Well, you're the boy who LIKES danger....

DOC: Yeah, but I like my danger where I kin SEE it....This
business of snakes poppin' out and bitin' folks and Ciffy
cats a-sneakin' up on you in the dark and boppin' you on
the head....That there's jus' plain UNHEALTHY.

JACK: Well, let's try to get this business organized....See where
we stand...First, Reggie, tell us everything that happened
to you on the deck up to the time you were slugged.....

REGGIE: Well, you sent me out to keep an eye on Captain Foster...
I say, he's a bit of an eccentric if you ask me...Washes
his hands and sniggers every time he talks to you....How
does a chappie like that get to be a millionaire?

JACK: Inherited his money, I understand.....

REGGIE: Quite, and coming into our cabin here and announcing the
death of his steward as though it was some bally joke.....

DOC: Yeah, but what happened after you followed him outside?

REGGIE: Nothing for quite a bit... He went up into the wheel-house..
It was while he was up there that a queer thing DID happen
though.

JACK: Yes.

REGGIE: His wife came out of her cabin.....

DOC: That purty little ole Ruthie gal?

REGGIE: (AMUSED) I say, you'd better not let Captain Foster hear you talk about his wife like that....Anyway, she didn't see me, although she was furtive and thought no one was watching her...

JACK: What'd she do?

REGGIE: Went to Dr. Parks' cabin..I say, he's not really a doctor is he....I mean to say, just a bally scientist, isn't he?

JACK: That's right....

REGGIE: Quite...Well, she rapped and he opened the door and they stood there in the dark and talked for perhaps three or four minutes.....

JACK: That was all?

REGGIE: Yes....After that she went to Dr. Davids' cabin and knocked there.

DOC: Hey, that little gal gets around....

JACK: But Davids was in the medical ward performing the autopsy...

REGGIE: That's right...When she got no reply she acted as though she didn't know what she should do next...And then finally she went back to her own room.

DOC: Well, what the heck does THAT mean?

JACK: I don't know...What happened next?....

REGGIE: About ten minutes later Captain Foster came down out of the wheel-house and went to the fo'c'sle and talked with Swensen, the engineer and Pete, the other sailor....

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-4A- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

JACK: In other words, after he had told us about the steward's death he immediately talked to Charley, the sailor on watch, and Swensen and Pete, who were off duty....

DOC: What's THAT mean?

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-5- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

JACK: Well, I'd suggest the three members of the crew are in his confidence....

DOC: Yeah, but confidence about WHAT?

JACK: I haven't any more idea than you do...And after that?

REGGIE: From there he went to the cabin he shares with Mrs. Foster...

JACK: He didn't come out again....

REGGIE: That's right...Not while I was conscious....No one did, as a matter of fact....

JACK: Well, if Parks was in his cabin, Dr. Davids was in the medical ward with us, Captain and Mrs. Foster were in THEIR cabin and Charlie was up in the wheel-house, then you must have been hit over the head by either Swensen or Pete.

DOC: Well, the low-down polecats.....

REGGIE: But look here...Why should either of THEM want to bash me for?

DOC: Because Captain Foster TOLD 'em to, that's why....

REGGIE: Oh, I say...You think that, Jack?

JACK: It sounds reasonable...We know he had a talk with them, just before it happened.

REGGIE: But Captain Foster hired us to work for HIM...Why should he bring us aboard, tell us nothing and then go about knocking us unconscious....

DOC: Yeah, Jack, how do you explain THAT?

JACK: I'm not even going to TRY....

DOC: But after all, son --

JACK: There's no use trying to guess...Let's put the rest of our information together and see what we've got....

DOC: Same bein' WHICH?

CR

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-6- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

JACK: Well first, the steward's death...Death by snake venom.....

DOC: Yeah and we went over this ship from top to bottom last night and what did it git us?

JACK: Nothing....

DOC: If they's a snake on this boat he must be a-hangin' by his toes from the propeller....

JACK: Exactly...No snakes...No sign of punctured skin from fangs on the body of the dead man, and yet a reputable doctor says he died of snake venom.....

REGGIE: I suppose he COULD be wrong....

JACK: It's possible....

DOC: Yeah, he could even be wrong on PURPOSE, couldn't he?

JACK: You mean he could say it was snake poisoning for some reason of his own?

DOC: Well, is they anything to keep him FROM it?...Is they anybody else aboard who could say he's WRONG?

JACK: No...

DOC: Well, there you are...

JACK: Except for one thing...

DOC: Same bein' WHAT?

JACK: That somehow Dr. Davids doesn't seem to me to be that kind of a man.

REGGIE: Quite..I can't see him in that light either...

DOC: All right, you hombres go ahead and believe like you want but I STILL say they can't be no snake bite without no snake....

JACK: That's just the point...There AREN'T any snake bites.....

DOC: Well, snake POISON...It's all the same THING....

CR

I LOVE A MYSTERY
JUNE 6, 1950

-7- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

JACK: Well, there we are...About all we know for a fact about the steward is that he's dead.

REGGIE: I say, they're going to bury him at sea?

JACK: Yes...This afternoon.

DOC: Doggone...That's one place I DON'T want to be buried...At SEA!

JACK: Well, we'd better keep our eyes open and our back to the wall then, because I have an idea that's what's going to happen to anyone who has the bad luck to die on THIS TRIP.

DOC: Yes, sir, that's my motto from now on...Don't die on this trip!

REGGIE: (AMUSED) A bally good motto.

JACK: All right...So much for the steward...Now next on our list is Arnold Foster....

DOC: And if he's a sea captain, I'm a tadpole's uncle.....

JACK: He's captain whether we like it or not.....

DOC: Well, he ain't got no BUSINESS bein'....

REGGIE: (AMUSED) I think Doc's particularly bitter because he has such a beautiful wife....

DOC: Well, I feel sorry for her, if THAT'S what you mean.....

REGGIE: (AMUSED) I mean a bally lot more than that as you very well know.

DOC: Then it's a doggone lie...I ain't so much as said howdy-do to Ruth Foster since we come aboard.....

JACK: And see that you DON'T....

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-7A- STORY NO. X - EPISODE NO. 3

DOC: Okay...okay...How many times you think you have to TELL me...Course if she comes a-runnin' and flings herself in my arms and asks me to save her, I don't reckon you got no objections --

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

JACK: (AMUSED) No, if she throws herself in your arms...Which I don't think she'll do --

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DOC: And why not, I'd like to know..Why, son, down in Texas where I come from I had girl's a-flingin' themselves in my arms right and left.

JACK: (AMUSED) Maybe down in Texas the girl's aren't so particular...

DOC: The heck they AIN'T...Why, I kin remember oncet when my cousin Winnie-Mae was bein' sparked by Tad Shoat-singer...

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES) I say, by WHO?

DOC: Tad Shoatsinger!...

JACK: (AMUSED) One of the local gentry, eh?

DOC: Yeah, I reckon..Huh?...Whatcha mean local gentry?

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

DOC: Well, anyway, Tad come to spark my cousin, Winnie-Mae one evenin' and Winnie-Mae wouldn't have nothin' to do with him..Her papa was mad on account of he figured, with Tad a-honeyin' around the way he was, he could expect to git Winnie-Mae married off afore the first snow flurry...

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

JACK: Doc, you get yourself tangled up in the longest most meaningless stories---

DOC: It AIN'T meanin'-less and besides I'm almost through..So Winnie-Mae's papa took her out in the wood-shed and whammed her with a board and then asked her why she wouldn't have no truck with Tad...

REGGIE: (AMUSED) I say, whammed her and THEN asked her?

DOC: Yeah, a old Texas custom..And Winnie-Mae said she'd heard that Tad slept nights with his bare feet a-stickin' out from under the covers and it weren't decent and fer that reason he could go some're ELSE to do his sparkin'...

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

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DOC: Well, don't tell ME Texas girls ain't PARTICULAR...

JACK: Are you finished?

DOC: 'COURSE I'm finished..And it's a true story too, dad-bust it...

JACK: Well, personally I'm a lot more interested in Captain Foster and some of his antics aboard the Blue Phantom...

REGGIE: Quite...Jack, why do you think he seemed so pleased over the death of the Steward?

JACK: Did you ever stop to think that perhaps he wasn't..That his snickering and smirking was his attempt to hide a terrible fear.

REGGIE: Fear?...Captain Foster afraid?

JACK: Why not?...He's certainly not a courageous person...

DOC: But what's your reason for figurin' like THAT?

JACK: Well, look...You remember how he leered and smirked at Dr. Parks when he announced the death...You remember how he kept his eyes on Parks and said, "Dr. Parks will be especially interested."

REGGIE: Quite...

JACK: It was almost gloating, triumphant the way he said it..as though he has suspected Parks of something all along and now had proof...

DOC: You mean Captain Foster thinks Dr. Parks killed the steward and is scared wall-eyed of him?

JACK: At least it's something to consider...

REGGIE: Jove, and I was just getting it settled in my mind that Captain Foster was the man to suspect...

bf

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DOC: Yeah and I ain't sure that ain't right no matter WHAT Jack says....What about the radio going on the bum right now... Nobody has anything to do with that 'ceptin' Captain Foster.

JACK: It's POSSIBLE someone else got into the radio room and wrecked things....

DOC: Yeah and it's jus' as possible that Foster done it hisself.

JACK: That's right..I'm just trying to consider this business from as many angles as possible..All right now, let's look at Dr. Ezra Parks, for a minute...

DOC: Who ain't no doctor, really...

JACK: That's right..A scientist...

REGGIE: But look here..What KIND of a scientist?

JACK: Well, this is supposedly a deep-sea expedition so it's natural to suppose he's an expert on under-sea life..

DOC: Mermaids and stuff like that, huh?

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

JACK: Doc, do you HAVE to drag the female angle into EVERY discussion...

DOC: Not angle, son..Curve..female CURVE...

JACK: All right...all right..Now what do we know about Parks after we've assumed he's a scientist interested in under-sea life?

REGGIE: That Ruth Foster went secretly to his cabin when her husband was out of the way...

JACK: Yes.....

DOC: That Foster half-way accused him of the murder, and according to you is scared silly of him...

JACK: Anything else?

REGGIE: I'm afraid not..Not very much, is it?

JACK: No, but every little bit helps..Now, what about Dr. Davids?

REGGIE: Well, for one, I jolly well like him...

JACK: I wish we knew why Foster chose him to be ship's doctor..

DOC: Well, one thing we DO know is that he's plenty interested in Ruth Foster..

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REGGIE: And that she tried to see him secretly last night.

DOC: Yeah and that he autopsied the Steward and said he was killed by snakes when they AIN'T NO SNAKES...

JACK: That keeps bothering you, doesn't it, Doc...

DOC: 'COURSE it does..And that's why I'm sayin' Dr. Davids ain't all he pretends..I think givin' us a bum steer, or anyway a-holdin' out on us.

JACK: Well, there we are..The trouble seems to be that we don't know enough about the poeple we're dealing with..What we need is more information....

DOC: I'd like to know where we're a-gonna git it..And another thing I'd like to know is, when do we eat?

REGGIE: (AMUSED) Breakfast at eight o'clock, Doc..

DOC: Breakfast at eight and here it ain't even seven fifteen yet..

JACK: You won't starve...

DOC: But my stomach's hungry and when a feller's stomach's hungry it ought to be fed..

JACK: We've still got to Shower and shave and dress...That'll take time..You feel like getting up, Reggie?

REGGIE: Oh, by all means..But look here, Jack..A few minutes ago you figured out that either Swensen, the engineer or the sailor Pete must have knocked me out last night..Aren't we going to do anything about it?

JACK: We are...

REGGIE: Yes, but WHEN?

JACK: The first opportunity we can catch them separately.

DOC: What's that for? We could wipe up the deck with them two in nothin' FLAT.

bf

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JACK: That would be great..A lot of information we'd get that way...What we want are FACTS..Information we can add to the fragments we have...

REGGIE: Righto..But you won't mind exercise a bit on the chappie who laid me out, if we find him, do you?

JACK: After I'm finished talking to him, I don't care what happens to him...

REGGIE: That's fair enough.

DOC: (STRETCHES, YAWNS) You fellers know what I wish we had, stead of all this mystery and secret stuff?

REGGIE: (AMUSED) What's that?

DOC: I wished they was a bunch a hard-headed two fisted hombres that we could tear into and work up a sweat...

REGGIE: (CHUCKLES)

SOUND: (BODY FALLING AGAINST DOOR)

REGGIE: (STARTLED) I say, what was that?

JACK: (GUARDED) Listen?

(PAUSE)

JACK: Sounded like something was thrown against our door, didn't it?

DOC: Yeah...How about having a look...

JACK: All right...Go ahead..

(PAUSE)

SOUND: (DOOR OPENS)

(OCEAN WAVES IN BACKGROUND)

DOC: Hey..Hey, Jack..They's somebody layin' outside the door..

JACK: (BACK) What's that..(COMING TO MIKE) Here, who is it..What's the matter with him?

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DOC: Don't know..Just a-layin' here....

REGGIE: I say, turn him over..Who is it?

DOC: (STRAINS) Yeah..Heey, it's Pete, the other sailor...

JACK: (GRIM) Here, let me have a look at him...

REGGIE: But..But I say..He isn't breathing is he?

JACK: No..He's not breathing....

DOC: Dead?

JACK: VERY dead...

DOC: And I s'pose they'll tell us HE was bit by a snake TOO....

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(MUSIC:..ORGAN - "Valse Triste")

SOUND: (SIREN)

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